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BUENA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL--AN INTRODUCTION.

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AN INTRODUCTION WAS PRESENTED IN THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF THREE REPORTS OF THE WORK DONE AT BUENA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL IN SAGINAW, MICHIGAN. THE ORGANIZATIONAL MODIFICATIONS IN EDUCATION THAT SUPPORT THE USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATIONS WERE STUDIED USING SYSTEMS ANALYSIS AND COMPUTER SIMULATION TECHNIQUES. THE GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL INCLUDED A COMMUNITY PROFILE, THE SCHOOL DESIGN, AND POPULATION. INCLUDED ALSO WERE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES. A MAJOR INNOVATION WAS THE USE OF CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION COMBINED WITH TEAM TEACHING. THE PROGRAM INCLUDED A TELELESSON OF APPROXIMATELY 25 MINUTES FOLLOWED BY DISCUSSION FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE HOUR. A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF GRADE 11 ENGLISH (ED 010 572) AND A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN IN USE (ED 010 573) WERE THE OTHER REPORTS OF THE SERIES. (RS)

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Buena Vista High School: An Introduction

ABSTRACT

This document is the first in a series reporting work done with Buena Vista High School in connection with the study New Solutions to Implementing Instructional Media Through Analysis and Simulation of School Organization. This document is a general description of the Buena Vista High School.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In SDC Document TM-1493/101/00, Purpose and Strategy of the School Simulation Project, dated 19 December 1963, project personnel stated their intention of using system analysis and computer simulation techniques to investigate organizational modifications in education that support the use of instructional innovations. This 2 1/2 year study began with a nationwide survey of high schools to identify a select few that are demonstrating creative approaches in organizing their resources to use innovation. As a result of this survey, six specific schools, including Buena Vista High School in Saginaw, Michigan, were chosen for intensive study.

A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Buena Vista High School is in District Nine of Saginaw County. The school is located at 3945 Holland Road, Saginaw; however, it is outside the city limits.

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Buena Vista High School draws from a population of approximately 10,000 people. This is an old area which has had a stable population. It has begun to grow in population now, but not particularly rapidly. The majority of the inhabitants of the district, other than farmers, is employed in a General Motors steering gear plant and other locally operated industries. There are also two fertilizer plants, plus various other smaller industries. Approximately half of the assessed valuation in the district is industrial.

The community could be termed lower middle class. Approximately 20 percent of the student body of Buena Vista High School is comprised of minority races. Despite the lower middle class nature of the student body, the assessed valuation of the school district is at about the state average.

The school district includes kindergarten through the twelfth grade; approximately 25 percent of the children attend college. The district has 3,407 students. Buena Vista High School has grades nine through twelve. The approximate enrollment at Buena Vista is ninth, 258; tenth, 232; eleventh, 190; twelfth, 183; for a total of 863. There is an approximate 5.4 percent dropout rate. Buena Vista High School has one class of approximately 12 to 14 mentally retarded children. The requirement for being admitted to this class is to have an I.Q. of less than 80.

Colleges in the area are Delta Junior College, located 10 miles away; Alma College, which is Presbyterian Church-related, located 40 miles away; and Central Michigan University, located 50 miles away.

B. PERSONNEL

Leadership in District Nine of Saginaw County is provided by Mr. Joseph G. Barr, the creative and dynamic superintendent. Mr. Robert L. Blue is the principal of Buena Vista High School, and Mr. James Blankhorn is the assistant principal. The school is staffed with 29 teachers, two counselors, two secretaries, five custodians, five school lunch program people, one librarian, and three television personnel. One of the television people is a producer-director; the second one is a technician; and the third is an artist-clerk. Eight interns from Central Michigan University at Mount Pleasant, also help in the teaching function. These interns work as the junior members of the team in team teaching situations. Each intern stays for one semester. However, the intern may be at one of three places in his educational program at Central Michigan. He may be in his junior year at college, in which event he is called an assistant. He may be a senior student, with a year's experience as an assistant; he is then called an extern. Or, he may be in his fifth year, in which case he has had two prior experiences in the internship program and is called an associate.

C. FACILITIES

The Buena Vista School (Figure 1) is of brick construction and was built in 1959. The school is interesting so far as teaching-learning space is concerned. It has only seven classrooms that would be called typical classrooms in size. There is a library, with approximately 3500 volumes, which seats 72 students. There is also an auditorium that will seat 525. The seats toward the front of the auditorium have armrests, so that this room serves as a classroom almost every hour of the day. There are both a boys' and girls' gymnasiums. There is a chemistry-physics classroom-laboratory, which can be divided to separate the lecture room from the laboratory. The laboratory is both large and fully equipped. The biology facility is separate from the physical science facility, and has a combined lecture and laboratory room. Both home economics and art have a lecture-laboratory arrangement. In the industrial arts area there is a separate lecture room and also a rather extensive laboratory for wood and metal work.

Much of the space, then, at Buena Vista High School is in the nature of large lecture rooms. Each room is equipped with as many as eight T.V. monitors. These rooms are frequently subdivided into two smaller rooms.

One of the interesting space arrangements is in the business education area. This area is made up of three rooms. Each room has one side open to a common hall. This means, then, that the typing room, the shorthand room, and the office practice room are separate, but not isolated.

II. CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION AND TEAM TEACHING

A. INTRODUCTION

The major innovation at Buena Vista is use of a closed-circuit television combined with team-teaching. In addition, there is some team-teaching that does not involve the television. This latter is true of the chemistry-physics areas. However, in most instances the television and team-teaching are tied together. Most of the television is closed circuit; however, there are two courses each year--American History and Government the first semester, and Economics and Government the second semester--that are taught via open-channel television from the Central Michigan Television Project. This is a project that provides educational television to districts in this area at a price of $1.00 per year per student. This service is used more at the elementary school level than it is at the senior high school level.

The main rationale for the use of television is that the school feels that through using a single teacher in the presentation of materials they are able, on any given day, to have the best teacher actually presenting the lesson.

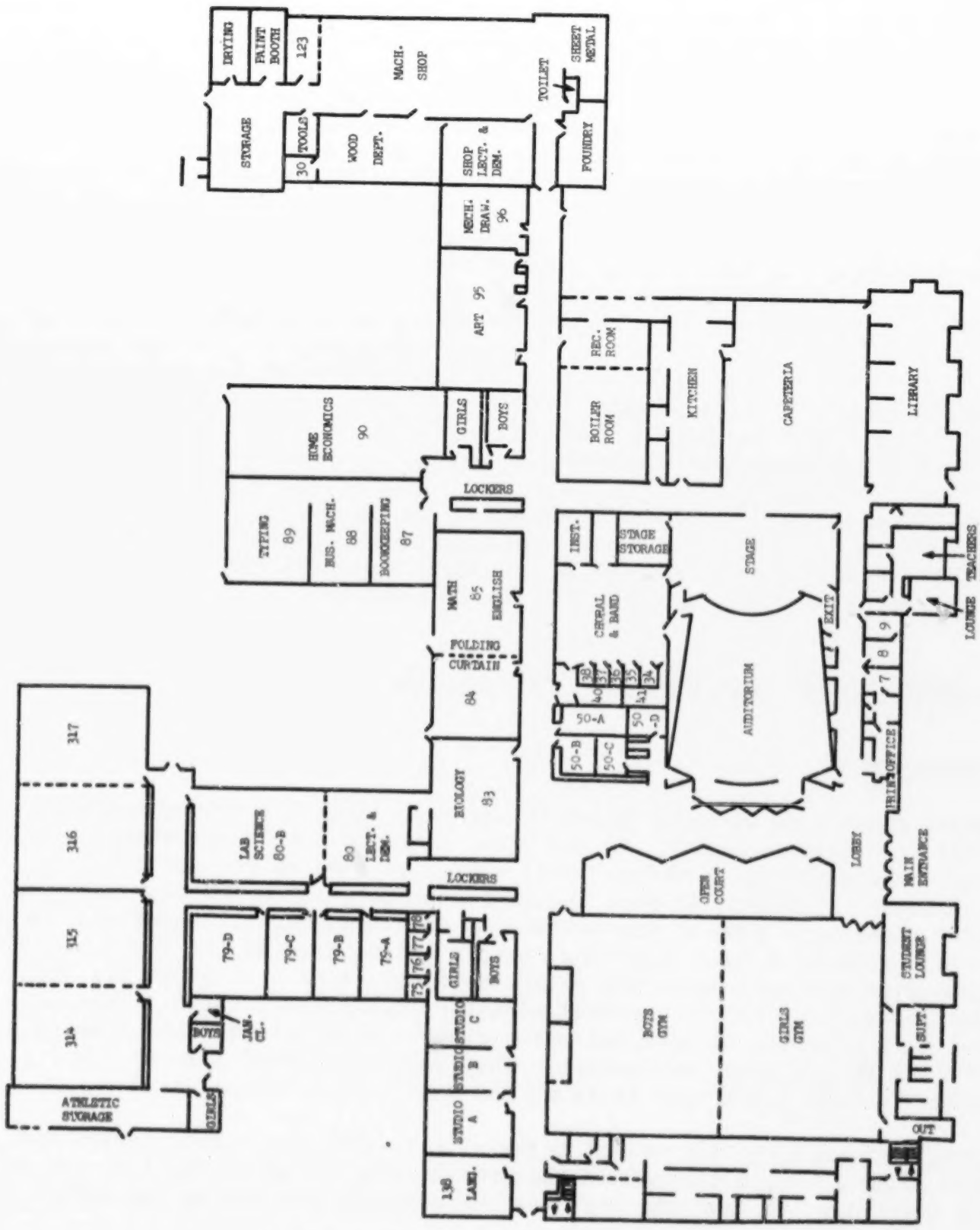

Figure 1. Buena Vista School Floor Plan

Typically, this is the team leader, who, if the group is large, is paid a six percent increment over his normal salary; if the group is medium-sized, the teacher is paid a three percent increment. However, the telelesson, as it is called at Buena Vista, is not always given by the team leader. In many instances it might be given by the second teacher in the team, or even by the intern. Mr. Blue indicated that, with the materials supplied by the technician-artist, and with the assistance of the television studio and the other facilities, even though a less intimate teacher/student relationship is maintained, the influence of the outstanding teacher is spread more effectively over a much wider group.

B. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The television system is used each hour of every day to give a telelesson. Typically, a telelesson lasts from 20 to 25 minutes, although with special permission it can last the entire hour. A given course has a telelesson either two or three times a week. For example, during first period on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, ninth-grade English is taught to approximately 100 students; on Tuesday and Thursday, general mathematics at the ninth-grade level is taught to approximately 100 students; then at 9:30, ninth-grade English is taught to another 100 students; and commercial arithmetic for the tenth-grade level is taught to about 100 students on Tuesday and Thursday. During third period Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, tenth-grade English is taught to 150 students. Earth Science is taught Tuesday and Thursday to about 140 students, and so on.

The typical procedure is that the telelesson is given for about 25 minutes and then the teacher proceeds from the television studio to the classroom, and either he or the second teacher conducts a follow-up discussion. This may be further lecturing using visual aids via an overhead projector. One reason the teachers sometimes continue the lecture in the classroom is that this permits use of colored materials, which the television does not relay. The class session may consist of supervised study, or a test.

Most of the lecturing is done via television; the discussions are carried on almost entirely in smaller groups. As already indicated, other team-teaching situations are also being used.